

No. XII.—NOTE ON A SUPPOSED NEW RACE OF *OTOCORYS ALPINUS*, THE HORNED LARK.

I have recently obtained a copy of the beautiful memoir published by M. Babault to record the results of his mission to India in 1914 to collect specimens on behalf of the Paris Museum. On p. 203 of the "*Résulas Scientifiques*" he describes a supposed new race of the Horned Lark from Rukshu which is named *Otocorys wellsii*. This new race is based on a male from Serchu and a female from Nima Mud, both obtained in July.

The new race is thus described :—

"Se rapproche beaucoup de *L'O. longirostris* de Gould, mais s'en distingue par la bande noire qu'elle a sur le devant de la tête, à la base du bec, et, qui mesure environ 2 millimètres de large. Elle est séparée par une bande blanche étroite des touffes de plumes noirâtres qui se trouvent au-dessus des yeux. Cette bande caractéristique donne à l'oiseau un faciès spécial, qui le distingue immédiatement des espèces voisines."

It will be observed that the new race is practically based on a single specimen as the females do not shew the frontal markings clearly.

Now the type locality for *O. longirostris* is Kulu and I have a good series of these larks from Lahul and from the Rhotang range which lies between Lahul and Kulu and forms the Kulu locality for this bird. An examination of the males in the series shews that the character relied on by M. Babault for his *Otocorys wellsii* is a mere individual variation : in my series I find gradations from a pure white frontal band extending to the end of the nasal plumes at the base of the beak, to a black frontal band 2 mm. wide formed by the whole of the nasal plumes being black, and so dividing the white of the frontal band from the beak.

Otocorys wellsii of Babault therefore becomes a synonym of *Otocorys alpestris longirostris* of Gould.

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No. XIII.—THE SHIKRA. (*ASTUR BADIUS*).

I have read Col. E. O' Brien's note on the food of the shikra in the last issue of the Journal with interest. Early in my service I used to keep shikras for hawking purposes, and often flew them at birds other than their accustomed quarry (Mynahs and Quails) in order to learn the different tactics adopted by the different kind of birds when pursued by a hawk.

In these circumstances the majority of small birds dive into the nearest bush, into which the hawk hesitates to follow, for fear of injuring her wings, or if she does follow, the small bird, if it escapes the first rush of the hawk, can easily dodge her in the bush, or effect its escape from the bush more quickly than the hawk when it will rarely be followed.

The Common Babbler or Seven Sisters (*Crateropus canorus*) is a gregarious bird of feeble flight and I often wondered how they managed to survive the attacks of hawks. Being so slow on the wing they should, one would have thought easily fall a victim to the slowest and most unenterprising of hawks. On one occasion I noticed one of these babblers flying across an open space and I immediately decided to try my shikra at him. I launched the latter in the direction of the babbler and she took up the chase and caught the babbler easily before it had time to reach cover.

The babbler having been brought to the ground in the claws of the hawk began to scream lustily, and, in less time than it takes to describe, the rest of his companions came to his assistance and fell on the hawk without the least hesitation, attacking her vigorously with beak and claws.